



# National Water Trails System

## Department of the Interior Application for Designation

### Section 1: Trail Information

#### BASIC TRAIL INFORMATION

Trail Name	Rancocas Creek Water Trail
Trail Location	Rancocas State Park, New Jersey. Both portions of the North and South Branch are tidal and encompass State Park and municipal lands. Ingress/egress points are located at the beginning of each tidal branch and at points in between.
Directions to Trail	Rancocas State Park 794 Rancocas Mt Holly Rd. Westampton, NJ 08060
Latitude and Longitude	39.988785 / -74.847472
	City(ies)/Township(s): Hainesport, Lumberton, Westampton, Mount Holly    County(ies):Burlington County State(s): NJ    U.S. Congressional District(s): 3
Short Description	Rancocas Creek originates in the New Jersey Pine Barrens and flows 36 miles west to the Delaware River. The wishbone area, which converges along the boundaries of Rancocas State Park, is 10 miles in length and has five public launch points and two noted rest areas. Other access points and rest areas are located on private lands and accessible with landowner permission. Educational opportunities to learn more about Rancocas Creek are available through municipal and non-profit outlets.
Long Description	Rancocas Creek originates in the New Jersey Pine Barrens and flows in a westerly direction for 36 miles to the Delaware River. There are three main tributaries within 360 square miles: the North Branch, the South Branch, and the Southwest Branch. The wishbone area, historically known as the Forks, converges along the boundaries of Rancocas State Park and is 10 miles in length and a tidal waterway. It has multiple safe and accessible ingress/egress points within the communities that it passes through including five public launch points and two noted rest areas. Additional launch points are in the planning stages, and additional rest areas are visible during low tides along the creek. Public launch points provide outdoor recreational opportunities to residents of all backgrounds and ethnicities as well as those from underserved communities. The Rancocas Creek water trail provides opportunities for exercise and education to the visitors using the trail via the historic sites along its banks. It serves multiple municipalities and small towns as it winds its way across the county. The North Branch start point of this trail connects directly with the non-tidal "Rancocas Creek Canoe Trail" developed by Burlington County and meanders from a distance of 14 miles to the east. The Rancocas Creek Canoe Trail contributes five additional access points on the creek.

The Rancocas Creek supports a variety of environmental habitats which make it unique. The state of New Jersey has designated a State Natural Area and a NJ Natural Lands Preserve along the Rancocas Creek due to the documentation of several rare species of both flora and fauna within Rancocas State Park. The headwaters of the Rancocas Creek North Branch originate in the Pinelands National Reserve due east, near the Burlington and Ocean County border. The Pinelands National Reserve is the country's first National Preserve classified as a Biosphere Reserve since 1978. A distinctive feature of the creek is that it is the only waterway within the NJ Pine Barrens that flows west and empties into the Delaware River.

The Rancocas Creek has a history that encompasses most of the important elements in the history of our country and throughout the State of New Jersey. Native Americans first inhabited the land followed by explorers and early NJ colonists. The wishbone area ("the Forks") was a prominent viewpoint and strategic location for Native Americans, providing protection, food sources, and access to surrounding lands. Noted colonists making their mark in the development of the country made their homes and maintained agrarian settlements on the rich inner-coastal plains. Many parts of southern New Jersey were host to the Underground Railroad in which the Rancocas Creek was thought to have played a contributing role. Timbuctoo (Westampton Twp.) was a noted fugitive slave community established early in the 1800s and remains a residential community today. Rancocas Creek's history and cultural importance extends even further into the nation's history as the graves of US Colored Troops from the Civil War can be seen in Timbuctoo's historic cemetery.

Archaeology projects are common along the creek and within its surrounding communities. The Rancocas Creek served as a transportation water trail for early American industry including brick manufacturing and sand mining. Rail lines and county highways crossed the area via scenic bridges, some of which remain today.

Moving forward into times of additional growth and development, the municipalities along the Rancocas Creek, in alliance with Burlington County and the State of New Jersey, are keeping in mind the significance of protecting and providing foundational plans for the future of the creek. As climate change creates a new focus on land/water relationships and policies, there is a recognized need to save tidal wetlands for the protection of existing waterside communities. Through joint preservation and conservation practices, the public benefits by gaining open space as well as additional opportunities for recreational activity. More importantly, there will be the ability to continue educating the public about the long history and community benefits that the Rancocas Creek has provided in the past. With careful planning and understanding, we can collectively look forward to what the Rancocas Creek will provide for future generations.

## TRAIL DETAILS

Length of trail open to public use 10.00 miles 16.09 KM Loop? No

National Designations: N/A

State Designations: N/A

Allowed Uses Boating, Motorized  
Boating, non-motorized: Canoeing  
Boating, non-motorized: Kayaking  
Boating, non-motorized: Rafting  
Boating, non-motorized: Tubing  
Fishing  
Heritage and History  
Hunting  
Wildlife Observation

Other Uses/Notes Camping available by permit at Iron Works Park. Reservations required through Mount Holly Recreation Department.  
Paddleboarding has become a popular activity in recent years. It most often occurs in areas closer to non-tidal waters.

Accessibility Information Available? Trailhead Signage: No  
Brochures: Yes  
Website: Yes  
Other Information:

Primary Trail Surface

Additional Surfaces Water, moderate moving  
Water, slow moving  
Water, still  
Grass or vegetation  
Snow or ice

## VISITING AND FEES

Open Dates 1/1 to 12/31

Times of Operation Sunrise to Sunset

Seasonal Notes Closures due to extreme weather, emergency situations or unforeseen circumstances do occur but rarely. In the event that this happens, there will be signs at access locations notifying visitors to contact County and State offices for additional information

Fees Admission Fee: \$0.00  
Parking Fee: \$0.00  
Permit Fee: \$0.00

Visiting and Fee Notes

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# Best Management Practices

## Mission Statement

To promote the unique and scenic Rancocas Creek as an outdoor learning platform, working collaboratively with volunteers and government agencies to provide natural, historic and community-based opportunities. In doing so, promote healthy stewardship and conservation practices on the waterway, local properties, parks and natural areas. Continue to encourage safe recreational activities and public access so that future generations from all communities and backgrounds may enjoy and appreciate the treasures that the Rancocas Creek provides.

## Recreation Opportunities

The State of New Jersey, Burlington County, and each of the local municipalities along the Rancocas Creek provide multiple access points along the 10-mile section proposed for national designation. There are several access points that are not publicly owned but used by residents. Currently, there are five noted public access points as noted in materials for this application, but Burlington County is in the process of developing another launch site on the South Branch Rancocas Creek and the State Park Service is planning improvements to open an additional launch on the North Branch. The New Jersey State Park Service recently obtained a parcel of land on the North Branch Rancocas Creek which may provide parking and access suitable for ADA-compliant recreation on a non-tidal portion of the waterway. The addition of these sites will provide closer access to the Rancocas Creek for more communities within the watershed and allow for convenient access for those with disabilities. In addition to recreational opportunities available at Rancocas State Park, several non-profit entities and private businesses also provide scheduled trips for education and recreation along the creek.

## Education

Enthusiastic volunteer groups, municipal and county recreation departments, and surrounding private businesses all attract visitors for the many water activities that the Rancocas Creek provides. Critical safety information is available to all visitors utilizing the Rancocas Creek via organizational websites and personal instruction. There is an active Adopt a Creek program in Mount Holly, NJ which focuses on collaboration between volunteers and local businesses. Regular clean-ups and maintenance of the creek increases awareness and stewardship for the continued health of the watershed. Prominent groups such as Pinelands Adventures, Outdoor Club of South Jersey, and the strongly involved Rancocas Pathways, Inc. provide instruction and watershed education services through their individual organizations. These groups are openly available to supply information specific to education, instruction, or general advice to visitors unfamiliar with water activities.

## Restoration

The State of New Jersey, nonprofit partners, and local governments are continually looking for opportunities to enhance the Rancocas Creek and provide additional access and educational opportunities for the public. The NJ Invasive Species Task Force has responded to manageable concerns at specified areas along the Creek. The NJ Natural Lands Trust obtained an area of 13 acres critical habitat named Holly Ford Ice Preserve. The NJ Natural Areas Council dedicated 63 acres to its holdings in the 1980s. Both areas are part of the Rancocas State Park. "Leave No Trace" programs, which teach and inspire people to enjoy the outdoors responsibly, are conducted regularly for issues such as beaver control, agricultural runoff, and water monitoring.

## Community Support

Community support abounds from all directions for this initiative. Every municipality along the Rancocas Creek in this proposal is engaged in working together working towards the maintenance and stewardship of the trail. Local towns and businesses often schedule events at Municipal, County and State Park sites along the Creek. Adopt-a-Creek programs in Mount Holly, largely coordinated by Rancocas Pathways, Inc., draw a large sector of the local population to participate in stewardship projects. The Rancocas Nature Center managed by Burlington County, holds extensive programming each week for visitors of all ages to become involved. The Upstream Alliance is active in coordinating paddling adventures that speak to emerging conservation leaders by offering them first-hand experience along critical waterways. Petty Island in Camden County is being restored through a joint venture of non-profit, local, state, and federal cooperatives. Burlington County continues the momentum of creating parks along the Creek for public enjoyment and offers extensive programming. Businesses support responsible stewardship and activities on the Rancocas Creek through donations to civic organizations, clubs, and schools.

## Public Information

The region in and around the Rancocas Creek is filled with engaging and active non-profit groups, involved government entities, and knowledgeable individuals. Several social media outlets are the key contact sites for information-sharing and obtaining reliable data. In addition to social media, the State of New Jersey, Burlington County, and individual municipalities maintain websites that are updated regularly, from which interested individuals can easily obtain information. The NJ State Park Service website provides an email and a Facebook page with contact information. The Burlington County website provides interactive maps of Rancocas Creek.

## Trail Maintenance

Each municipality along the Rancocas Creek is responsible for the upkeep and development of their launches. Each agency has maintained and improved their launches safely responsibly. There are several non-profit groups that are regularly available to assist with projects and often step in to make a needed repair or help with the upkeep of utilized areas. Rancocas Pathways, Inc. is presently the most active entity on the Rancocas Creek. They vigilantly watch for hazardous and illegal activity (contacting necessary enforcement entities when appropriate), post items of public interest, interact with residents along the waterway, engage with visitors to enhance awareness of important issues, and coordinate regular clean-up projects as outlined on their website and other social media outlets. The activities by this group demonstrate a commendable example of sustainable stewardship.

## Planning

Burlington County Parks has a Rancocas Creek Canoe Trail section that is designated as a non-tidal, public use water trail. The NJ State Park Service is submitting this wishbone section that surrounds Rancocas State Park and flows through neighboring municipalities. There has been recent discussion regarding the creation of an ADA access point and installation of additional launches.

Each municipality has an environmental plan for use and management of their open space, which integrates the Rancocas Creek. For example, please see Mount Holly's Public Access Plan as prepared by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. The Plan identifies the Township's vision and goals for improving public access to the Rancocas Creek, which include: adding new public access points, fostering connections between Rancocas Creek and Mount Holly Township, increasing and improving physical and visual access to the Creek while balancing habitat needs of present species, providing amenities for visitor safety at public access locations, developing and installing informational signs, maintaining access locations for fishing, and more.

The fact that all agencies are collectively focused with our desire to see the Rancocas Creek achieve designation as a National Water Trail speaks volumes of the dedication and goal setting of this group. The State of New Jersey and Burlington County governments have had preliminary discussion about extending this trail to the Delaware River. The Cooper River in Camden/Camden County also empties into the Delaware River. The Upstream Alliance recently received funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and are in the process of developing a water trail in Camden. The shoreline area along the Delaware River in Camden and Burlington counties is undergoing environmental restoration along the back channel at Petty Island. A long-term goal for our partnership would be to eventually connect the two proposed water trails, tying the counties together. The establishment of a longer trail would attract more stakeholders and provide access to Philadelphia and Camden residents.

## Supporting Documents:

BMP	Type	Description	Link
Planning	Brochure	Restoring Petty Island	100_Restoring_Pettys_Island_091221_.pdf
Recreation	Map	Burlington County Water Trail Map that feeds into our application	100_Burl_Co_Rancocas_Canoe_Trail_map_201403260812388398.pdf
Recreation	Map	Hainesport Map of Rancocas Creek	100_Hainesport_Rancocas_Creek_MAP.pdf
Recreation	Photo	Burlington County sign at Iron Works Park, Mt Holly NJ	100_Burl_Co_sign_at_Mt_Holly.jpg
Recreation	Photo	Iron Works Park Mt Holly connection to Burlington County Canoe Trail	100_Iron_Works_Park_end_of_Burl_Co_trail.jpg
Recreation	Photo	Iron Works Park, Mt Holly #1	100_Mt_Holly_Iron_Works_Park_1.jpg
Recreation	Photo	Iron Works Park, Mt Holly #2	100_Mt_Holly_Iron_Works_Park_2.jpg
Recreation	Photo	Iron Works Park, Mt Holly #3	100_Mt_Holly_Iron_Works_Park_3.jpg
Recreation	Photo	Monroe St Park, Mt Holly #1	100_Monroe_St_Pk_1.jpg
Recreation	Photo	Monroe St Park, Mt Holly #2	100_Monroe_St_Pk_2.jpg

Recreation	Photo	Watershed sign Mt Holly	100_Watershed_sign_Mt_Holly.jpg
Recreation	Photo	Rancocas State Park launch	100_Rancocas__SP_launch_1.jpg
Recreation	Photo	Melpine RS1	100_Melpine_1.jpg
Recreation	Photo	Melpine RS1 2	100_Melpine_2.jpg
Recreation	Photo	Hainesport #1	100_Hainesport_1.jpg
Recreation	Photo	Hainesport #2	100_Hainesport_2.jpg
Recreation	Photo	Hainesport #3	100_Hainesport_3.jpg
Recreation	Photo	Lumberton #1	100_Lumberton_1.jpg
Recreation	Photo	Lumberton #2	100_Lumberton_2.jpg
Recreation	Photo	Lumberton #3	100_Lumberton_3.jpg
Recreation	Photo	Lumberton #4	100_Lumberton_4.jpg
Recreation	Photo	Lumberton #5	100_Lumberton_5.jpg
Education	Brochure		100_Burl_Co_Program_Event_Guide.pdf
Education	Other	Rancocas Nature Center #1	100_RNC_edu_1.jpg
Education	Other	Rancocas Nature Center #2	100_RNC_edu_2.jpg
Education	Other	Rancocas Nature Center #3	100_RNC_edu_3.jpg
Education	Other	Rancocas Nature Center #4	100_RNC_edu_4.jpg
Education	Other	Rancocas Nature Center #5	100_RNC_edu_5.jpg
Education	Other	Rancocas Nature Center #6	100_RNC_edu_6.jpg
Education	Other	Rancocas Nature Center #7	100_RNC_edu_7.jpg
Education	Other	Rancocas Nature Center #8	100_RNC_edu_8.jpg
Education	Other	Rancocas Nature Center #9	100_RNC_edu_9.jpg
Education	Other	Rancocas Nature Center #10	100_RNC_edu_10.jpg
Education	Other	Rancocas Nature Center #14	100_RNC_edu_14.jpg
Education	Other	Rancocas Nature Center #15	100_RNC_edu_15.jpg
Education	Other	Rancocas Nature Center #16	100_RNC_edu_16.jpg
Education	Brochure	Rancocas Pathways public brochure on website providing extensive information	100_Rancocas_Pathways.pdf
Restoration	Brochure	Mt Holly, NJ Municipal Public Access Plan	100_20170331_Mt__Holly_Municipal_Public_Access_Plan_final_002.pdf
Restoration	Brochure	Lumberton Twp Environmental Resource Inventory	100_Lumberton_Twp_Envl_Resource_Inventory.pdf
Restoration	Map	Holly Ford Ice Preserve - NJDEP Natural Lands Trust	100_holly_ford_Ice.pdf
Restoration	Other	Lumberton Twp opening of Canoe Launch Rancocas	100_Lumberton_Township_Opens_New_Canoe_Launch_Along_the_Rancocas_Creek.docx
Restoration	Map	Rancocas Creek	100_Rancocas_Creek_Watershed_Management_Area_19.pdf

		Watershed Management Area 19 - NJDEP	
Community	Brochure	Burlington County, Amico Island	100_Amico_Trail_Map_Dec_2020_MAP.pdf
Community	Brochure	Burlington County, Boundary Creek	100_Boundary_Creek_Trail_Map_Dec_2020_MAP.pdf
Community	Brochure	Burlington Co, Long Bridge Park	100_Long_Bridge_trail_map.pdf
Community	Brochure	Burlington County, Pennington Park	100_Pennington_Park_Trail_Map_2020_MAP.pdf
Community	Brochure	Burlington Co @ Rancocas State Park	100_Rancocas_State_Park_trail_map_Hainesport.pdf
Community	Brochure	Burlington County, Smithville Park	100_Smithville_trail_map.pdf
Community	Brochure	Burlington County, Willingboro Lakes	100_Willingboro_Lakes_Trail_Map.pdf
Public	Other	Watershed sign in Mt Holly	100_Watershed_sign_Mt_Holly.jpg
Public	Other	Burlington County sign at Mt Holly	100_Burl_Co_sign_at_Mt_Holly.jpg
Public	Other	Long Bridge Park sign	100_20210517_114514.jpg
Public	Brochure	Rancocas State Park DEP map	100_Rancocas_State_Park_DEP_map.pdf
Public	Map	The map for the proposed Rancocas Creek Water Trail	100_MAP_trail_final.pdf
Public	Other	Canoe launch sign at Smithville Park	100_Sign_smithville_canoe_launch.jpg
Public	Brochure	Rancocas Nature Center brochure	100_Rancocas_Nature_Center_Trail_Guide.pdf
Planning	Brochure	Camden Water Trail funds announcement	100_Camden_Water_Trail.docx
Planning	Brochure	Mt Holly Municipal Access Plan	100_20170331_Mt_Holly_Municipal_Public_Access_Plan_final_002.pdf
Maintenance	Brochure	Web Brochure of Rancocas Pathways	100_Rancocas_Pathways.pdf
Community	Brochure	Petty Island brochure	100_Restoring_Pettys_Island_091221_.pdf

## Contacts

Agency/Unit	Name/Position	Mailing Address	Delivery Address	Phone/Fax	Email/Website	ACTIONS
NJ Dept of Environmental	Mr. Mark Texel Assistant	501 East State St		(609) 292- 2772	mark.texel@dep.nj.gov	

Protection NJ State Park Service - Rancocas State Park	Director, New Jersey State Park Service	MC 501-04 PO Box 420 Trenton, NJ 08625		<a href="https://www.njparksandforests.org/index.html">https://www.njparksandforests.org/index.html</a>
Mount Holly Township Municipal Offices Township Council	The Honorable Jason Jones Mayor	23 Washington St Mt Holly, NJ 08060	(609) 845- 1100	<a href="mailto:jjones@twp.mountholly.nj.us">jjones@twp.mountholly.nj.us</a> <a href="http://www.twp.mountholly.nj.us/content/386/384/789/803.aspx">http://www.twp.mountholly.nj.us/content/386/384/789/803.aspx</a>
Hainesport Township Municipal Offices Township Committee	The Honorable Leila Gilmore Mayor	One Hainesport Centre PO Box 477 Hainesport, NJ 08036	(609) 267- 2730 (609) 261- 4762	<a href="mailto:lgilmore@hainesporttownship.com">lgilmore@hainesporttownship.com</a> <a href="https://www.hainesporttownship.com/recreation">https://www.hainesporttownship.com/recreation</a>
Lumberton Township Municipal Offices Township Committee	The Honorable Gina Laplaca Mayor	710 Rancocas Rd. Municipal Building Westampton, NJ 08060	609-267- 3217	<a href="mailto:glaplaca@lumbertontwp.com">glaplaca@lumbertontwp.com</a> <a href="https://www.lumbertontwp.com/departments-services/recreation/">https://www.lumbertontwp.com/departments-services/recreation/</a>
Burlington County Dept of Resource Conservation Department of Resource Conservation	Ms. Mary Pat Robbie Director	PO Box 6000 Mt Holly, NJ 08060	(856) 642- 3850 (609) 261- 7271	<a href="mailto:mprobbie@co.burlington.nj.us">mprobbie@co.burlington.nj.us</a> <a href="http://www.twp.burlington.nj.us/recreation">http://www.twp.burlington.nj.us/recreation</a>
Westampton Township Municipal Offices Township Committee	The Honorable Sandy Henley Mayor	710 Rancocas Rd. Municipal Building Westampton, NJ 08060	(609) 267- 1891 (609) 267- 7398	<a href="mailto:shenley@westampton.com">shenley@westampton.com</a> <a href="https://www.westamptonnj.gov/about">https://www.westamptonnj.gov/about</a>

**Public Contact:** NJ Dept of Environmental Protection

## Owner Consent and State Support

Type	Description	Filename
Owner Consent	Hainesport Township letter of support	100_Hainesporttwp.pdf
State Trails Support	State Trails Coordinator letter of support	100_StateTrailsCoordinatorSupport2021.pdf
Owner Consent	Lumberton Township letter of support	100_LumbertonTownshipLetterofSupportRancocasCreekNationalWaterTrailApplication.pdf
Owner Consent	Mt Holly Twp	100_MountHolyLOSandResolution.pdf
Owner Consent	Burlington County Board of Commissioners LOS	100_BurlCoNationalWaterTrailDesignationLOS.pdf

Owner	NJ State Park	100_NJSPSupportletter.pdf
Consent	Service letter of support	
Owner	Westhampton_LOS	100_WestamptonLetterofRecommendationforRancocasCreekDesignation_LOS.pdf
Consent		

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## Additional Supporting Materials

Type	Description	URL/Filename
Website	NJDEP Rancocas Creek National Water Trail	<a href="https://www.njparksandforests.org/rancocas creek/">https://www.njparksandforests.org/rancocas creek/</a>
Brochure	Rancocas State Park Area Map	100_rancocasarea.pdf
Website	NJ Natural Lands Trust map	holly_ford_Ice.pdf (nj.gov)
Website	Burlington County NJ interactive Parks & Trails map	Parks and Trails in Burlington County, NJ v2 (arcgis.com)
Website	Rancocas Nature Center	<a href="http://rancocasnaturecenter.org/index.html">http://rancocasnaturecenter.org/index.html</a>
Other	Historian Paul Schopp publication. South Jersey Culture & History Center, Stockton University	100_TheForksoftheRancocas.pdf
Letter of Support	Bill Bolger letter of support	100_Rancocas_NWT_Bolger.pdf
Letter of Support	NJ Senator Troy Singleton letter of support	100_Senator_Singleton_support_letter.pdf
Map	Official NJ SPS map of Rancocas Creek Water Trail	100_MAP_trail_final.pdf

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## Signature Page

Type	Description	URL/Filename
Signature Page	Signature page for final application of Rancocas Creek Water Trail	100_FINALSignaturepageSPS.pdf



